

### **The Lens of Our Own Experience:**

We all are aware that none of us can be truly objective or impartial in dealing with other people – particularly when the subject matter is money, children, parenting, support or divorce. This is a good thing – our experiences give us a basis for intuitive understanding of the dilemmas of litigants as well as some ideas about alternative paths that might be helpful for them. On the other hand, our experiences are not all inclusive, therefore at times our expectations and assumptions may not fit a particular family. To help prepare for my talk, I thought it would be useful for each of us to take a minute and anchor ourselves in the context of our own experiences.

This exercise is purely confidential. You will not be asked to share your scores. Its purpose is to get you “warmed up” and curious about how our different experiences color our thinking about alimony issues. I hope that each of you will bring a unique and controversial slant to the issues and discussions today.

The following is a list of some of the typical statements made by people going through a divorce or separation about the notion of sharing their income with the other spouse. You are asked to rate your degree of agreement with each statement on a scale of 1 to 5. The scale is:

- 1 - I strongly disagree
- 2 - I somewhat disagree
- 3 - I feel pretty neutral about this
- 4 - I somewhat agree
- 5 - I strongly agree

Which of these statements seem true to you? Which make you uncomfortable? How do you think that your spouse, if any, would answer the question? Your children or grandchildren?

Statement	Myself	My spouse	My son/ grandson	My daughter/ grand-daughter
Husbands should be the primary wage earner after marriage.				
Husbands should be the primary wage earner after the birth of children.				
Wives should have a career or solid job experience before marrying.				
Wives should continue to work in their career or field after marriage.				
Once children are born, it is impossible not to have the spouses take on different roles in the family, one as primary wage earner and the other as primary care giver.				
Once children are born, it is important to permit mothers to be available for them as much of the time as possible.				
If the parties agreed during the marriage that it was in the best interests of the children for one party to stay at home with them, that should continue after the divorce, if possible				
If one party promised another party that he or she could stay home with the children, that promise should be enforced after a divorce				
Agreements made by the parties about their responsibilities during the marriage were predicated on being married and, after a divorce, are irrelevant				
In a divorce, it is important to allow the wage earner an incentive to go to work.				
Women working outside the home is detrimental to the healthy development of children and puts a strain on the marriage.				
A stay home parent can resume job experience and become self-sufficient within 2 – 5 years.				
Modern women can earn almost as much as men with comparable skills.				
A healthy adult has a responsibility to support him or herself				
The reasons for awarding spousal support have become obsolete in a modern society.				
An adult with no minor children has a responsibility to work full time before he or she requests spousal support to supplement their income				

1 -I strongly disagree  
4 -I somewhat agree

2 - I somewhat disagree  
5 -I strongly agree

3 -I feel pretty neutral about this

Statement	Myself	My spouse	My son/ grandson	My daughter/ grand-daughter
Women with small children should be able to stay home or work part-time, even after divorce, if their husband earns enough money to support it				
A women who stayed home with her children during the marriage should be grateful for the years she had that luxury, and should not expect it to continue post-divorce				
The person who gets out of bed and deals with the stress of working all day should always have more income than a person who stays at home				
If I earn the money, I should have more say over how it is spent.				
Pensions are intended for the benefit of both spouses in a marriage.				
It is fair to award a substantial part of the primary wage earner's income to the other spouse if s/he is financially dependent.				
If a financially dependent spouse decides to end the marriage, she or he should not expect spousal support.				
If a financially dependent spouse is in love with or had an affair with a third party, she or he should not expect spousal support.				
Cohabitation by a former spouse should terminate spousal support for her.				
If the husband is the primary wage earner and has an affair, he should have to pay more in spousal support because of his misbehavior.				
Being out of the workforce for 5 years makes one's marketability pretty stale.				
Fault allegations in a failed marriage are a two way street with each side having valid complaints against the other.				
Women are apt to remarry after divorce so they should get short term awards of spousal support.				
Remarriage should terminate the spousal support obligation of a former spouse.				
A professional degree or lucrative career is the most important asset in the marital estate.				
After a short term marriage, alimony should not be awarded.				
Alimony fosters an unhealthy continued dependency, lessening a woman's initiative and ambition.				

1 -I strongly disagree

4 -I somewhat agree

2 - I somewhat disagree

5 -I strongly agree

3 -I feel pretty neutral about this